

SOUTHWEST UTAH PLANNING AUTHORITIES COUNCIL (SUPAC)

Minutes of a meeting held November 4, 2003

1. The Southwest Utah Planning Authorities Council (SUPAC) met at the Five County Association of Governments Building in St. George, Utah, on Tuesday, November 4, 2003, at 1:00 p.m. Those in attendance at the business meeting are listed on the rosters attached as Appendix A to these minutes.
2. John Williams conducted the meeting for Vice Chairman Scott Truman who was out of state. John called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.
3. The minutes of the meeting of September 2, 2003, were moved for approval by Ron Thompson after a clarification by John Williams on Paragraph #7. Commissioner Gardner seconded the motion and all voted aye.
4. Cordell Roy was not able to attend the meeting and so Bruce Barrett gave the following information on the Lake Powell water outlook. He said that Lake Powell is down about 95 feet and it depends on what kind of winter we have as to whether it will come up or how long it will take to come up. It will take a few years of normal or above normal to bring the Lake Powell water up. It will probably even drop next year if it is not quite a bit above average.
5. Ron Thompson gave a fall water report. He said there are two issues – we ended the year with 70% of normal precipitation so we are going into the 6th year of below normal precipitation. Also, there is a serious soil moisture deficit in the watershed so even with a normal snow pack we won't see any significant change this year. The October moisture is about 70% of normal so it doesn't look particularly good. The cities should be in pretty good shape but it will have a significant impact on irrigated agriculture. The cities are tied into the well system and should be in pretty good shape. Ron also reported that Quail Creek is about half full. There is 2,000 a.f. of water left in Kolob Reservoir. Sand Hollow Reservoir is nearly empty and Gunlock Reservoir is down below the conservation pool.

Ron also reported that the state water engineer has put out a proposal to change aquifers that are being mined. He has proposed that they would essentially allow pumpage in water aquifers based on priority and safe yield in the aquifer. There will be more studies on this but economic impacts will probably end up driving the matter. This could impact particularly in the Enterprise area.
6. The next item on the agenda was a report on beetle infestation issues on Dixie National Forest by Ron Wilson. He said that most of us have probably seen letters in the newspaper over the last two or three months wondering about why the trees on Cedar

Mountain are dead. He said it is true. All the Spruce trees are dead. He gave a little history on the timber harvesting in the area. He said in the 30 years prior to 1987 most of the harvesting activity was in the Pine and mixed Conifer. When they implemented the Forest Plan they had never been challenged on timber sales up to that time. In 1988 a group of people organized on Cedar Mountain and called themselves the Friends of the Dixie. They started challenging every timber sale. They got help from the Sierra Club and SUWA and other environmental groups. They started seeing a lot of opposition and started having a lot of public involvement in trying to address their concerns. They started seeing information in 1991 from the data collected. He also showed the council a map of the disease surveys over the years from 1990-2001. The trees were in a stressed condition from low water in around 1991 and the beetles were able to attack. The laws didn't allow them to take the quick action that was needed. They tried to start thinning the forest to get ahead of the infestation in 1995 but it was too late. He showed a comparison map of the years between 1993 and 2001. The environmentalists didn't stop them but delayed them and the delays were the same thing as stopping them because they lost a lot of the forest. Ron Wilson said they will lose 50,000 acres of Spruce. Some of the preventative measures they discussed were tree traps, repellants, spraying, etc. but most of them would not work because there were just too many beetles and spraying is so expensive that it is cost prohibitive on such a large scale basis. They need to get some of the dead fuel out of the forests now because of the fire danger. These groups have appealed every action they've taken but up to this point Ron said they hadn't lost any decisions.

They have been able to sell the timber to log house market so they have been able to get some good value out of it. The Utah Environmental Congress is the main environmental group that is appealing all the sales and everything they are trying to do. Hugh Thompson said this same thing is about to be repeated in Escalante. He said they have an approved project there that has passed NEPA, etc. but there have been two lawsuits filed. The bugs are in there in small amounts now but if they don't take immediate action they are going to lose that forest too. Ron Thompson asked if our Congressional delegation understands the urgency of this. This should be exempted from NEPA just like a forest fire.

Quinn Warnick (Senator Bennett's office) said that the Healthy Forest Initiative legislation is moving forward. It has passed the Senate and House and is in conference now. It had been held up a long time but because of the California fires and all the homes burning it passed through easily.

7. Ron Wilson also gave an OHV Tag Report. The TAG committee met this morning before the SUPAC meeting. Randy, Bevan and Brad have been working on a participation agreement for the High Desert Trail. It is complete now and being routed for signatures. Most of the state agencies have already signed it and then it will go to the counties. After that they will form a steering committee and designate a study group to get a handle on this OHV situation through law enforcement. There are 128,000 OHV's in Utah and that is increasing by 28% a year. They need to come up with a

strategy on how best to manage this growing problem. At their meeting they discussed getting penalties higher for violations; getting revenue from people coming in from out of state by buying stickers. Someone suggested the possibility of issuing points that would go on a person's driving record which could cause them to lose their driver's license with too many points. This might make a difference.

8. Congressional update reports were given as follows:

Jeannine Holt (Senator Orrin Hatch) brought copies of a press release on the forest bill from their office. She also reported that Senator Hatch sponsored a wonderful five-county Senior's Conference in St. George with over 468 registered. They received lots of positive comments on that. Senator Hatch was at the conference.

Mike Empey (Congressman Matheson) said that Cong. Matheson supported the Healthy Forest bill and they are hopeful that it will contain some emergency prevention. He also reported that he is having some success in the economic development area and the semi-conductor plant which would be a real economic benefit to this area. Mike said that Congress was supposed to be out by October 31 but now they are saying it might be Thanksgiving. They will have to reschedule the appointments made with the Congressman for November.

Quinn Warnick (Senator Bennett) passed out a press release regarding legislation funding the Department of Interior which contains over \$34 million for Utah projects requested by Senator Bennett. He said it was 4th out of 13 that have to be signed for funding. It passed the Senate last night. Quinn reviewed some of the areas of interest the council may have in that legislation.

9. John Williams asked for any other calendar items or reports from council members. Ron Thompson reported that final funding has come into place for the Shivwits Indian settlement. The Secretary is supposed to sign the final notice before the end of the year. He also reported the water district has started the first phase of the Gunlock to Santa Clara pipeline project. They hope to have first phase done by March.
10. Hugh Thompson reported that tomorrow at 10 a.m. DNR is having a sensitive species meeting under a new rule negotiated with the public. The state sensitive species list has to pass more scrutiny than before. It will be reviewed every year and that is the hearing that is tomorrow. People had to sign up to speak 14 days in advance and nobody signed up. It is at the same time as the inauguration of the new governor.
11. Hugh also informed the council that State Rep. Brad Johnson has requested DNR to assist him in drafting a state organic act. If anyone is particularly interested in this issue Hugh suggested they contact Rep. Johnson. This will be kind of a state umbrella policy that will include Wild & Scenic River Act, RS2477, grazing, timber, water, wildlife, and recreation. Claire Ramsey suggested ACEC's be included in this as those can be a real problem and the counties need help making this workable.

12. Kevin Carter reported that State Trust Lands are looking at the sale of two parcels by Beaver Dam Slope to Kern River. He also reported that they executed an agreement with Washington City completing everything that needs to be done for milepost 13 interchange so UDOT can start construction.
13. Wayne Thomas told the council that the Dept. Of Environmental Quality has set up an air monitoring station in St. George by Elks field. It will be up and operating and gathering data in the next few weeks.
14. Henry Maddux said that there will be an announcement in the Federal Register in the next few weeks opening the comment period on the Mexican Spotted Owl. They are asking for comments on the proposal put out in 2000. This mainly affects Arizona and New Mexico. Henry also reported that a condor chick from the Vermillion Cliffs population is 26 weeks and should be the first wild chick to fly.
15. There was no further business before the council and the next meeting was set for January 6th at the Five County Association of Governments building.
16. Two agenda items suggested for that meeting were:
 - Report on UDOT mile marker 13 in Washington
 - Draft Watershed Plan on Virgin River - presentation by water district
15. The meeting was adjourned.

Secretary